

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001534

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B. NEULING
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2010
TAGS: [ELAB](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [ZI](#) [ZCTU](#)
SUBJECT: TRADE UNION PROTESTS AND ARRESTS

REF: A) HARARE 1527 B) HARARE 981 C) HARARE 703 D)
HARARE 671 E) HARARE 617

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher Dell under Section 1.4 b/d

Summary

1. (C) The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) staged protests in six major cities across Zimbabwe on November 8, ending with the delivery of a petition to the Minister of Finance on the country's economic meltdown. At least 120 people ZCTU activists, including ZCTU President Lovemore Matombo and General Secretary Wellington Chibebe, were arrested as a result of the demonstrations. ZCTU Spokesperson Mlamleli Sibanda declared the action a success. National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) leader Lovemore Madhuku and others arrested in connection with the NCA's November 5 marches remain incarcerated. End Summary.

Harare Protest Makes an Impact

2. (C) The ZCTU had planned to stage protests in Harare, Bulawayo, Mutare, Gweru, Masvingo, and Chinhoyi on November 8. The police disrupted the protest in Harare, which ZCTU claimed included 500 people. Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) representative Irene Petras told PolOff on November 8 that police had arrested 120 ZCTU activists in Harare, with 116 still in police custody on November 9, including General Secretary Wellington Chibebe and President Lovemore Matombo. In a circular distributed on November 9, the labor union noted unconfirmed reports that Chibebe and others had been tortured the previous night. (Post has since confirmed with ZCTU lawyers that Chibebe has so far not been physically abused in custody.)

3. (C) Despite the arrests, Sibanda stated that the protestors had achieved their main objective and had delivered a petition to the Ministry of Finance. The petition demanded a minimum wage of at least Z\$9.5 million (the Poverty Datum Line), a maximum of a 30 percent income tax, free anti-retro-viral drugs (ARVs), an improvement in fuel availability, and protection of jobs by not allowing cheap, substandard Chinese goods into Zimbabwe.

Other Protests Less Successful

4. (C) Sibanda claimed the protests in Bulawayo and Mutare had each drawn 200 people. However, suspended Mutare mayor M.T. Kagurabadza and local Bulawayo businessman Jyotirdhar Laxmidas independently told PolOff that the police had prevented the marches in both cities by arresting key individuals before the protests started. Police also reportedly cordoned off areas in Gweru, Chinhoyi, and Masvingo to prevent the protests in those cities from going forward.

5. (SBU) For its part, the state media acknowledged the protests but downplayed their significance. It reported the arrest of the leadership, which it claimed was acting without the concurrence of ZCTU's constituent unions, and urged the public to cooperate with police against "disruptive" and "anti-Zimbabwe" elements.

Other Developments

6. (C) The National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) put out a press statement on November 9 stating that NCA's Chairman Lovemore Madhuku was still being detained at Stodart Police Station in the Mbare high-density suburb of Harare. The statement went on to say that Chitungwiza Mayor Mischeck Shoko and NCA Field Officer for Manicaland Bernard Dube were arrested on November 9.

Comment

17. (C) Unlike the NCA protests over the weekend, the police were ready for the ZCTU on November 8. The greater vigilance of the police likely reflects growing GOZ concern at a more visible opposition. However, if the pace of protests continues to increase -- with more planned actions for this coming week (Ref A) -- the loyalty and resolve of the police may be further tested.

DELL